

United Service Club a Hint of Over There

Thrilling First Hand Stories of the Great War on Land and Sea and in the Air Picked Up Between Games From Invalided Fighters

NOT every one is privileged to see the titanic drama now being enacted along the western front, but if you are lucky you may spend a few hours in the United Service Club, where you will get the best long distance view of the big show to be found anywhere.

Here are a few gems culled from a drop in visit the other afternoon:

First, meet Sergeant Bomber McGinnis of Boston, Mass. McGinnis is the name, which should be enough description without entering into details of personality.

Sergeant Bomber McGinnis is the club's chronic optimist, champion checker player and orderly. Somewhere out in No Man's Land a shrapnel shell came along and clipped off one of his legs, but a little thing like a leg more or less never bothers a McGinnis.

On the present occasion the sergeant tore himself away from a hot checker offensive against a member of the Royal Flying Corps to extend greetings to the visitor and summon shock troops in the person of the manager. That worthy came limping up to do his duty.

Persiflage From the Sergeant.

"What's the game, sir?" demanded the sergeant. "Are ye nosin' about now to be sent back to Blighty?"

"No, sergeant," was the pained response. "I have a miserable rheumatism in my right knee. Knecks me completely out."

"Whisht, now, an' ain't ye unfortunate!"

"You're shouting, I am."

"An' ain't I the lucky nibs now, no right knee to get rheumatism in?"

After that, does or does not Sergeant Bomber McGinnis deserve his title of club optimist?

"I was pitchin' about out in Ohio when Bill pulled that bone about bossin' the whole blamed earth," is the way he describes his entrance into the war. "I figured it was going to be the biggest scrap in the world, and it wouldn't be right for McGinnis not to see it. It cost me a pin to get a look in, but I don't regret it. If they find some use for one-legged men I'll butt right in again. I want to meet the Fritz that bit off that pin."

"You're getting back to put it up on Fritz, eh, what?" broke in an English officer with the insignia of a Captain and three gold braid bars on his sleeve indicating the number of times he had been wounded. "Reminds me of my friend Nicholson over there."

Naval Reserve Men There.

So saying he indicated a man of medium height, stockily built, writing at a nearby desk. The man was Lieut. John R. Nicholson, Royal Naval Reserves.

"Nicholson," continued the Captain, "is an Australian. He joined out with the first overseas expedition and served fifteen months at the front with the Anzacs. Then he was wounded and sent back to Blighty. When he was about recovered he happened to mention the fact he had spent most of his life at sea, and that he had a master's license."

"The officer he told this bit of news to wanted to know why in the name of heaven he hadn't let it out back there. Nicholson said he hadn't had time, he wanted to get in the fight in a hurry and as the boys were all ready to go he thought he was jolly lucky to get with them."

"As a result of this conversation he was made a Lieutenant in the R. N. R. The service needed men like him the worst way. 'I'll take the job,' he agreed, 'on one condition.' 'What is it?' asked the Colonel. 'That you give me leave so I can go back to my regiment for a few minutes,' Nicholson answered."

"The Colonel thought that few minutes leave was so peculiar that he asked more about it. Nicholson told him right enough. He said the sergeant-major of his regiment had picked on him for fifteen months solid. All he wanted was to go back long enough to meet up with the poor old thing so he could draw up and make him salute."

"His request was granted. He returned to his regiment, met up with the S. M., enjoyed the salute he had travelled all that distance to get, returned to London at once and was placed in the most dangerous of the sea services, the decoy fleet."

"The decoy fleet is better known as the Naval Suicide Club; its purpose is to attract submarines, get them to give chase and torpedo. While the attention of the U-boats is centred on this quarry a destroyer sneaks up and sinks them. Nicholson has had three boats torpedoed under him. He has helped catch three submarines. He says he does not care where they put him; so long as he had that salute from old George Trouble, the S. M., he can say cheery-o to anything."

"You fellows remember that British officer who used to drift in every now and then?" said the club manager. "He was in mufti. We made a lot of cracks about his loud gear. He wore a very conspicuous wrist watch, carried his kerchief in his sleeve and was even suspected of drinking perfume. In fact he was dandied up like Piccadilly on a sunny afternoon."

"Many times the boys tried to draw

him to his knee by a piece of shrapnel, and was invalided back. As soon as he was able to be about he came home and enlisted with the Americans."

"Hear about the two Sammies who studied trench French?" asked McClintock. "They were getting by with it good and were all smoked up over the fact. One evening they were sitting in a village foodery finishing dinner."

"How about a shot of coffee, 'Possum?' asked the first Sammie."

"I'll fall," said the second."

"Oh-h, garsong, dukes cafeys and— and— Say, 'Possum, what's the French for creme de menthe?"

Poilu Puzzled by Slang.

"Reminds me of the poilu who couldn't get on with his English," contributed an officer in the blue of the army of France, but whose identity was not disclosed. His words were doled out slowly and concisely as if each one was being weighed and measured before its delivery.

"This poilu was having much difficulty to understand the language. Always there was some new use of it to puzzle him. One day he met a fellow student, also a poilu."

"How you make out wid de Engleesh?" poilu No. 2 asked."

"I cannot understand how she ees," was the reply. "Thees morning I meet one Tommy. 'How you feeling, Tommy?"

that the words dead and death are entirely dropped from the soldier's vocabulary? A man is either 'napeu' or he has 'gone West.' It is a beautiful expression when you come to think of it. Suggests the continuation of the soul into the land beyond."

Capt. Odell, who is of a serious turn of mind, made so, as he insists, by the war, spoke of how the men are invariably religiously inclined before going into battle. A religious ceremony always precedes a trip over the top. The men take a quick review of their past and most of them make solemn vows they will live different lives if they come through. Once they go over they go to it. Nothing can stop them then but cold steel."

This is how the United Service Club came to be:

"There are dozens of clubs, reading rooms, amusement places, rest rooms and the like for the use of soldiers and sailors,



Checkers always is a popular game in the United Service Club.

him out, to get him to tell something of himself, but he seemed to prefer talking about the new shows. He was the sort of bird who, if he went to the theatre, probably spent the time between acts reading the 'What Men Will Wear' column."

"Finally one day he opened up. Maybe you think he did not knock us all dead. He had been at the front with the Royal Flying Corps, wounded seven times, seven invalided-back stripes to his credit. The last time he was over the German lines when a Boche airman shot away the tail of his machine. Of course this meant a complete loss of control."

Dropped 6,000 Feet and Lived.

"He was up 9,000 feet. His machine began to dive. He kept his eyes on the altimeter until it registered 6,000 feet. That is the last he remembers. He woke up in a hospital. He was badly bruised and suffering from shock, but otherwise uninjured."

"Can you imagine falling from an altitude nine times as high as the Woolworth Building and not being flattened out like a griddle cake? What really happened was the plane fell much as a lead falls, sort of fluttered to the ground and paralleled the earth before striking. This broke the force of the fall. To understand how it happened take a piece of paper about the size of a leaf, hold it high up and let it fall to the floor. It will give you exactly the idea of what happened to the fellow we picked out for a sissy willow."

"He insisted he was fit enough; his nerves had gone back on him a bit, that was all; he'd be right-o in no time. As the sergeant says, you never can tell from the label."

Lieut. Alexander McClintock joined the group. McClintock is known as the fighting Kentuckian. He went over with the Canadians at the start of the scrap, received the compliments of Fritz in the shape of a deep furrow ploughed from his

ask beam. What do you think he say. "Jolly well fed up and d—d hungry." How you make out such answer—jolly well fed up and d—d hungry. It cannot be so."

(Space between d's deleted by censor).

Sergt. H. Austin Beck of the First Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force, broke out with a yarn about Boche linguists."

"Many of the Germans," said Sergt. Beck, "speak English quite well, and it is no uncommon thing at night to hear them trying it out on us."

"Every now and then they hand us a surprise as they call across from their trenches. Imagine hearing Fritz shout, out of the darkness, 'Have you ever been in Butte, Montana?' or 'How's little old New York?' You wonder how he ever got wise to the fact there was a Butte in Montana."

"This firing of trench English is all right as long as they stay in their trenches or are in our hands, prisoners. There is a story going the rounds out there, however, which shows the danger of even this long distance familiarity."

"A German succeeded in crawling up quite close to a trench held by a British regiment, the Second Welsh Fusiliers. Not having been observed he remained in a protected position and called out:

"So, that's the Second Welsh?"

"Yes," some one replied."

"Any Swansea men there?" he inquired, as that is the place where the majority of this regiment were recruited."

"Yes," the answer came back."

"How many?"

"About ten."

"Well, share this among you," he called, tossing a hand grenade into the trench. It blew four of the men West and injured some more. The fraternizer made good his escape."

"Speaking of going West," remarked Capt. Eugene Odell, also of the Canadian Expeditionary Force, "have you noticed

the men in the ranks," explained the manager, "but somehow kind hearted benefactors overlooked the officers."

As a matter of fact, officers are quite as much at a loss to know where to go in New York as privates. Take a young officer, for example, who comes to town from Sunston or one of the Western cantonments. He has never been further East than Kansas City. He has no friends in New York, no acquaintances. He doesn't know the Battery from the Bronx."

Junior's Pay Soon Gone.

This young officer comes expecting to stay a couple of days and is ordered to remain four or five weeks. The pay of a junior lieutenant does not admit of his cutting any wide swath along our pleasure pathways. Everywhere he goes costs money. He finds himself cleaned, up against it."

It is to prevent such happenings, to make the stay of the men who are serving their colors in responsible positions comfortable and agreeable, that the United Service Club was formed. Another motive was to offer a place where officers of the different countries might meet informally and exchange ideas, a sort of a get together centre."

The club is established on the first mezzanine of the McAlpin Hotel. The hotel management has set aside spacious quarters for the exclusive use of its soldier guests. There are no club dues, no charges of any sort for the use of the club equipment. Officers of any and all of the allied armies are cordially invited to drop in and make themselves comfortable."

Comfortable? Capacious leather chairs, the kind you sink in and refuse to be moved from by main force. Generously equipped writing desks with engraved stationery bearing the club name. All the current periodicals and newspapers."

But best of all, you can always scare up a good game of checkers, of chess, of dominoes. And the war game goes on interminably."